

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L REYKJAVIK 0616

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MARR, IC, US, NATO
SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER'S VIEWS ON NATO BASE

REF: (A) REYKJAVIK 590 (B) REYKJAVIK 594

1. CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER TODAY AFFORDED ME OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE WITH HIM HIS ALTHING REMARKS OF APRIL 26 (REFTELS). I TOLD AGUSTSSON HIS REMARKS RAISED TWO QUESTIONS: FIRST, WHETHER THEY REPRESENTED POSITION OF GOVERNMENT, AND SECOND, IN EVENT THEY WERE PERSONAL, WHETHER HE REALLY BELIEVED WITHDRAWAL ICELAND DEFENSE FORCE WAS IN ICELAND'S OWN SECURITY INTEREST.

2. AGUSTSSON SAID VIEWS HE EXPRESSED APRIL 26 WERE HIS OWN AND THOSE OF PROGRESSIVE PARTY WHICH, HE STATED, WERE WELL-KNOWN AND HAD NOT VARIED OVER THE YEARS. HE AND OTHER MEMBERS OF HIS PARTY CONTINUE TO BELIEVE ICELAND DEFENSE FORCE SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN IN STAGES AND NEW ARRANGEMENTS MADE WITH USG TO ASSURE CONTINUED AVAILABILITY AND READI-
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NESS OF KEFLAVIK FACILITIES IN EVENT OF EMERGENCY. HE RECALLED THAT VARIOUS PROPOSALS TO THAT END HAD BEEN PUT FORWARD TO USG BY PREVIOUS LEFT GOVERNMENT. WITH 1974 CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT, NEW LEADERSHIP HAD ASSUMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR ICELAND'S SECURITY RELATIONSHIP TO U.S. THROUGH IDF AND NATO. AS FOREIGN MINISTER HE ACCEPTED PRESENT GOVERNMENT'S POLICY REFLECTED

IN 1974 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING. HOWEVER, HE WOULD NOT HID FACT THAT HIS PERSONAL VIEWS REMAINED UNCHANGED AS DID THOSE OF PROGRESSIVE PARTY WHICH DATED BACK TO 1949 WHEN ICELAND ENTERED NATO.

3. IN REPLY, I SAID I WAS PLEASED TO HEAR FOREIGN MINISTER SAY HIS APRIL 26 COMMENTS DID NOT REFLECT GOI POLICY. NEVERTHELESS, THEY WERE DISTURBING. HE HAD REFERRED TO PARTY'S VIEWS AS DATING BACK TO 1949. SURELY, HE WOULD NOT CONTEND THAT STRATEGIC SITUATION AFFECTING NORTH ATLANTIC AREA HAD REMAINED UNCHANGED IN NEARLY THIRTY YEARS. IN CONTRAST TO IMMEDIATE POST WW II PERIOD, U.S. NO LONGER HAS NUCLEAR MONOPOLY. SOVIET AIR AND SEA POWER HAS GROWN ENORMOUSLY. SOVIET MILITARY REACH IS PERIODICALLY DEMONSTRATED IN AIR SPACE AND AT SEA NOT FAR FROM ICELAND ITSELF, MOST RECENTLY DURING SOVIET EXERCISES. WHATEVER MERITS OF PROGRESSIVE PARTY POSITION MIGHT HAVE BEEN IN 1949, I THOUGHT IT SHOULD REFLECT CURRENT REALITY. SOVIET POWER HAD EXPANDED SUBSTANTIALLY AND BALANCE OF POWER PROVIDED BY NATO COULD NOT HELP BUT BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY WITHDRAWAL OF IDF. DESPITE WHAT SOVIET DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER ZEMSKOV MIGHT HAVE SAID ABOUT EXISTING POWER BALANCE HELPING TO PRESERVE PEACE, I WAS CERTAIN SOVIETS HAD NOTICED AND WELCOMED MINISTER'S REMARKS RE IDF.

4. AGUSTSSON SAID HE KNEW OTHER MINISTERS IN GOVERNMENT WERE NOT HAPPY WITH WHAT HE HAD SAID. PERHAPS HIS CHOICE OF WORDS HAD BEEN UNFORTUNATE. HE HAD NOT DELIVERED THEM
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FROM A PREPARED TEXT. BUT, HE WENT ON, AS I KNEW PROGRES- SIVES AT THEIR RECENT PARTY CONFERENCE HAD CONFIRMED POSITION THEY TRADITIONALLY HELD RE IDF PRESENCE ICELAND. THIS HAD NOT RPT NOT BEEN AT HIS INITIATIVE, BUT SINCE THEY HAD DEFINED THEIR POSITION HE FELT THAT HE SHOULD STATE IT IN ALTHING DEBATE OF APRIL 26.

5. I SAID I UNDERSTOOD ALL THIS, BUT I WAS NOT SURE OTHERS WOULD IN WASHINGTON SINCE IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO SEPARATE HIS COMMENTS AS PROGRESSIVE PARTY MEMBER FROM HIS POSITION AS FOREIGN MINISTER. HIS REMARKS WERE NOT HELPFUL IN PROMOTING COOPERATION IN SECURITY MATTERS WHICH I KNEW HE AND I WANTED. FINALLY, I SAID I KNEW SOME ICELANDERS SOMETIMES CITED U.S.-NORWAY SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS AS MODEL FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE U.S.- ICELANDIC SECURITY RELATIONSHIP. I SAID I THOUGHT NORWAY'S SITUATION WAS VERY DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF ICELAND. NORWAY HAS AN ARMY, AIR FORCE AND NAVY OF ITS OWN, UNLIKE ICELAND WHICH WITHOUT IDF WOULD BE PHYSICALLY DEFENSELESS.

6. DISCUSSION THIS SUBJECT CONCLUDED WITH ME SAYING THAT
I HOPED FOREIGN MINISTER UNDERSTOOD REASONS WHY I FELT
COMPELLED TO RAISE SUBJECT WITH HIM AND WITH HIM SAYING
THAT HE DID, INDEED, UNDERSTAND.
BLAKE

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